

During my first visit 15 years ago to Bulgaria with the International Republican Institute, I witnessed a dying Communist State frozen in time. Today, Bulgaria is a valued member of NATO and soon to be admitted to the EU.

The Bulgarian people are proving themselves to be courageous and capable to meet the challenges of political, defense and economic transformation.

I want to thank my hosts Tuesday of the enthusiastic economic team of Prime Minister Simeon Saxe-Coburgi Gotha, Foreign Minister Solomon Passy and President Georgi Purvanov. Also, America is well represented in Bulgaria by Ambassador Jim Pardew and his gracious wife Kathy.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

#### DEMOCRATS WILL FIGHT REPUBLICAN ABUSE OF POWER IN SENATE

(Ms. SLAUGHTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, the congressional Republican abuses of power continue in the Senate where Senator FRIST is preparing to change the Senate rules for the first time in 200 years.

Senator FRIST and Senate Republicans are waging an unprecedented political power grab. They are changing the rules in the middle of the game and attacking our historic system of checks and balances so they can ram through a small number of judicial nominees who otherwise cannot achieve consensus because of their poor record of protecting individual rights.

Our House Democrats join our colleagues in the Senate committed to fight this Republican abuse of power. We will protect the role of the judiciary as the guardian of the rights of all Americans, assuring that all judges who are confirmed in the Federal courts be as intellectually honest and fair as possible, rather than ruling just on one side of one interest.

Drunken with power, rewriting the rules is what has been happening in Washington the most in recent years. The House Republican leadership tried to weaken the House ethics rules to protect one of their own, and they failed. Let us not let the Senate do the same.

#### CONGRATULATING ELEVENTH DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOLS

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in praise of three very impressive schools in my district, Columbus High School, LaGrange High School, and Campbell High School, which were selected by Newsweek magazine among the top high schools in America.

To have three Eleventh District schools included on this prestigious list speaks to the dedication and accomplishments of our district's educators, students, and community members.

As the former chairman of the Marietta City School Board, I know the great work that goes on in our school districts. I am glad the rest of the Nation finally knows about it as well.

LaGrange High School has a long tradition of providing students with the kind of education that truly helps our children succeed in life.

Columbus High School traces its history back to the 1890s, so it is no wonder the school is a perennial education all-star; practice makes perfect.

Campbell High School has upheld the standard of excellence in Cobb County for years, its teachers, staff, and students showing a relentless ambition for achievement, and, just last week, hosted our Vice President for a discussion on Social Security.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating these schools.

#### AMERICAN PEOPLE SUPPORT FILIBUSTER

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I just want to stress that the protection of the filibuster is something that the American people support.

I heard one of my colleagues just a few minutes ago talk about the New Jersey filibuster which is down here at the Mall with a group of people who are trying to make the point that we must protect the filibuster. We should not repeal it as the Republicans want to do, because it does protect minority rights. It protects individual freedoms in terms of making sure that justices and judges that are appointed are those that have a consensus.

I want to say that, in my State, it is not just the people involved in the New Jersey filibuster; a lot of other people have expressed their concern on this issue. Just a week or two ago, I was at Princeton University outside the Frist Student Center, and the students there at Princeton University were conducting a 24-hour filibuster which went on for almost 2 weeks, I think it may still be going on, because they felt so strongly about this issue. They feel strongly about it because it has been around for so long. It is over 200 years now that the Senate rules have provided for a filibuster, and that is what our Founding Fathers wanted, because they did not want an abuse of power. They did not want the majority to be the absolute rule.

#### PRaising AMERICA'S SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to praise America's small business owners. They really are our Nation's economic engine, and these small business owners and our Nation's employers are doing a great job with this free enterprise system that we enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, there is good news about the economy that is out. In April, this economy created 274,000 new jobs. Also in April, we saw that retail sales exceeded projections. We thought we would have a .7 percent retail sales growth; in fact, we had a 1.4 percent retail sales growth.

Mr. Speaker, it just shows that manufacturing numbers are up. Capital investment is up. Manufacturing investment and output is up. The economy is at work, and it is working for America's families.

America's small businesses are doing their job, and I salute those small business owners.

#### GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS FOR U.S. ECONOMY

(Mrs. MALONEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, thankfully, there have been a couple of bright spots over the past week in the economy. April was just the sixth month during this administration in which at least 250,000 jobs were created, a welcome relief for this struggling economy. Meanwhile, the trade deficit in March decreased from its record high level in February, though it is still on pace to become a record year, the highest trade deficit in the history of our country.

Still, the positive news on the economy is often accompanied by equally troubling news. New statistics show that each paycheck American workers take home ends up buying less and less. The prices of many basic goods from gas to milk have shot up, but workers' wages have not kept pace. Americans are working hard and producing more, but they are not seeing the benefits in their buying power. This is terrible news for America's families. We have to have those wages at least keep pace with inflation.

#### PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1544, FASTER AND SMARTER FUNDING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS ACT OF 2005

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 269 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 269

*Resolved*, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1544) to provide faster and smarter funding for first responders, and for other purposes. The first